

John Haskell House  
Windsor Highway (Route 32)  
New Windsor  
Orange County  
New York

HABS No. NY-5664

HABS  
NY,  
36-New 1,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

JOHN HASKELL HOUSE

HABS No. NY-E664

Location: Windsor Highway, Route 32, New Windsor,  
Geographic Location Code:  
Latitude: 41°28'29"N. Longitude: 74°02'34"W.  
UTM Coordinates

Present Owner: Calvet Tool Rental  
Same Address as Above

Present Occupant: Unoccupied

Present Use: Storage

Statement of Significance: The Haskell House is an unusual, perhaps unique, early 18th century structure. Probably built in the 1720's, the house is architecturally significant for both its early date and the techniques employed in its construction. The original section of the house is built of square-cut logs laid horizontally to the second floor plate. Above this level, it has a heavy timber frame infilled with clay plaster on hand-split lath. This combination of construction techniques was unusual in the Colonies and probably unprecedented in this area of the Hudson River Valley. The adaptation of log construction to so large and formal a house is also extraordinary. Despite additions, alterations, and a long period of neglect, the house remains with much original fabric intact.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: The list on the following pages is a chain of title to the land on which the Haskell House stands. Most of the original records are located at the Orange County Court House, Goshen, New York.

Chain of title provided by Janet Dempsey of Cornwall, New York. Key numbers refer to liber and page.

TITLE SEARCH OF HASKELL PROPERTY 10/11/74

1. Bk. 8, Albany Land Papers John Haskell received 2000 acre patent June 29, 1721
2. Liber RH, p. 146, 170 John Haskell to Evan Jones 2000 acres (no deed found, but mentioned in later deeds) March 7, 1739
3. " by will of Evan Jones to his widow - 2000 acres May 21, 1755
4. Kingston deeds, Liber GG from heirs of Evan Jones to Alexander & Cornelius Wood 429 acres May 19, 1761
5. from Woods to Moses Fowler - 229<sup>+</sup> acres (no deed found) See below
6. Kingston deeds, Liber GG from Fowler to Sylvannus Dusenbury - 229<sup>+</sup> acres Sept. 19, 1769
7. " by will of S. Dusenbury to his widow - 229<sup>+</sup> acres March 30, 1782
8. U-33 Stephen V.W. Dusenbury and Sarah of New Windsor to Lancaster B. Dusenbury of NYC for \$1500 April 16, 1819

All the one equal undivided seventh part of all that certain lot .... part of a tract of 2000 acres granted by Letters Patent to John Haskell - description the same as GG-73: Fowler to Dusenbere .... excepting 20 acres conveyed by Samuel Dusenbury to Cornelius V.W. Dusenbury

Kingston deeds, Liber GG Messrs. Wood to Judah Harlow - 100 acres May 3, 1762

Kingston deeds, Liber II Messrs. Wood to Jonathan Hasbrouck - 100 acres June 3, 1762

leaving 229 acres for Fowler from the Woods 400 acre purchase. The 2 lots above were located just north of the Haskell house property.

9. 50-155

Executors of the will of Lancaster B. Dusenbury of NYC to John Hewlett of Hempstead  
April 15, 1834

will of Lancaster B. Dusenbury (dec. Feb. 1824): gives New Windsor property (three sevenths of the land belonging to his father Samuel D. to infant children)

Court of Chancery - July 6, 1830 - partitions lands of Samuel Dusenbury - division into mountain and lowland lots

John Hewlett gets mountain lots 1, 2, 4  
lowland lots 1, 5 and parts of 3 and 4

10. 50-160

Sylvanus B. Dusenbury of New Windsor and wife Eliza to John J. Hewlett of Hempstead for \$1400  
April 15, 1834

2 lots: no. 3 of the mountain lots  
lowland lots 3 and 4 - part of 29 acres

11. 81-372

John Hewlett of Hempstead to Phineas Rice for \$7100  
Sept. 6, 1843

part of the farm whereof Samuel Dusenbere the elder deceased died seized now in possession of Timothy Oakley

Begins where west line of Snake Hill Tpk. intersects the north line of the farm of S. D. - mentions lane leading from tpk. to dwelling house of Oakley, also NE corner of farm. 116 acres

12. 116-61

Phineas Rice to Joseph Longking of NYC 113 acres similar to 81-372  
mentions dwelling house and lane  
March 24, 1852

13. 140-751

Joseph Longking to Thomas O. Buckmaster for \$7735  
April 1, 1856

2 parcels: 14.09 acres and 57.51 acres  
mentions property of Charles Turner, of Henry Cornell and the railroad

14. 219-419

Mary A. Buckmaster to Margaret C. Vail for \$18,000 71.47 acres Sept. 3, 1869

same description as 461-238

15. 461-238

Heirs of Walter Vail to Charles and Mary  
Schaefer for \$4700 71.47 acres  
Oct. 21, 1902

land of which Margaret C. Vail died seized  
mentions lands of Buckmaster, Pearson,  
Cornell. Beginning at a marked hickory  
tree ... on Snake Hill in line of lands of  
James R. Dickson and Henry Cornell; along  
Cornell's lands S66 E 14888, along "lands  
S 26 10' E 274' 7" to a sassafras tree, etc.

16. 495-511

Mary Schaefer, widow of Charles S. to David  
Nourse for \$8,000 71.47 acres  
Oct. 25, 1907

real estate of which Margaret C. Vail died  
seized

17. 849-487

David Nourse to Paul Hromec 14.9764  
acres Oct. 31, 1940

18. 1858- p. 1052

Paul Hromec to Putnam Lake Restaurant Corp.  
13.5 acres Oct. 15, 1970

19.

Putnam Lake Restaurant Corp. to Calvet Rental  
Inc. July 12, 1973

A. Physical History (Continued)

2. Date of Erection: Probably 1720's
3. Original Plan and Construction of Building: The plan of the original section of the house remains almost entirely intact. Board partitions flanking the fireplace in the south parlor, first floor, have been dismantled but remain in the building. Some partitions on the second floor, though of later construction, are probably in the same locations as the original. Although somewhat deteriorated, the structural system is entirely original and is covered on the exterior by later finishes. Only the main section of the Haskell House contains original, 18th century fabric.
4. Alterations and Additions: The fireplace openings in the first floor rooms were made smaller in the late 18th century, and were framed by Federal-style mantels. The mantel in the south parlor was removed but remains in storage within the building. The back, shed-roofed addition was probably built in the first quarter of the 19th century. The incongruous Greek Revival doorway to this addition was most likely inserted in the 1830's or 40's. The French doors on the first floor, and the second floor windows probably date from the third quarter of the 19th century. The exterior stucco and board sheathing, and some interior woodwork might also have been added at this time. The dormers are 20th century additions.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

John Haskell, the builder of this house, was a military officer who served as a steward for Brigadier Robert Hunter, colonial governor of New York and New Jersey. Haskell made himself useful to two colonial governors, Hunter, and his successor, William Burnet, and received large tracts of land from them both, the first of these in 1719. An important achievement of Governor Burnet's administration (1720-28) was the building of a combined fort and trading post at Oswego; and Haskell was paid \$5 "for making a Model of the house at Oswego." The choice of log construction for his own manor house may be related to Haskell's experience in the design of military fortifications.

The 1720's construction date is suggested by a road return of 1729 which described a road which was to pass "along the footpath which is now used between ye house of Mr. John Haskol and the mill of...Mr. Chambers." Further documentary evidence exists in a letter from

Cadwallader Colden to Sir William Johnson sent in 1763. In this letter, Colden mentions that an Indian complaint was heard at the "House of Mr. Haskell...near 40 years" (earlier).

The second owner of this building, Evan Jones, a "Practitioner of Physick", was also an historical figure of note. His son, Dr. John Jones, helped organize the Medical Department of the Continental Army. Sylvannus Dusenbury owned the property when Simeon DeWitt surveyed the area for General Washington in 1782. John Hewlett, of the prominent Long Island family that first settled in Hempstead in the 17th century, was a later owner of the property. Hewlett had married a daughter of the Dusenbury family.

Perhaps the most important event associated with the house occurred during the Revolutionary War. In 1782, Washington's army of about 7000 troops camped in New Windsor for the winter. Washington himself lived closeby in the Hasbrouck House in Newburgh for that period of time. However, most of the New Windsor campground lay within the bounds of the original Haskell tract.

### C. Sources of Information

#### 1. Primary and Unpublished Sources

- a) Dempsey, Janet, The Haskell-Dusenbury House, an unpublished manuscript.
- b) Abstracts of Wills, Collection of the N.Y. Historical Society, 1893.
- c) Accounts & Minutes of Governours Hunter and Burnet and Their Children, Manuscript Volume, N.Y. Historical Society.
- d) Colonial Land Papers, Manuscript Section, N.Y. State Library, Albany.
- e) Map of the Township of New Windsor made for the Proprietors of New Windsor by Charles Clinton, 1749, N.Y. Historical Society.
- f) Miscellaneous Deeds, Office of the Secretary of State, Albany.
- g) Orange County Deeds, County Clerk's Office, Goshen, N.Y.
- h) Papers of Gov. Robert Hunter, N.Y. Hist. Soc.
- i) Papers of Gov. William Burnet, N.Y. Hist. Soc.
- j) Papers of James Alexander, N.Y. Hist. Soc.
- k) Records of the Road Commissioners of Ulster County, Albany, Historical Records Survey, 1940.
- l) The Colonial Laws of New York, Albany; James B. Lyon, 1894.
- m) The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden, Collections of the N.Y. Hist. Soc., 1917-35.
- n) Ulster County Deeds, County Clerk's Office, Kingston, N.Y.

- c) Will of Evan Jones, Court of Appeals, Albany, New York.
2. Secondary and Published Sources
  - a) Eager, Samuel, An Outline History of Orange County, N.Y., (Newburgh, N.Y., 1846)
  - b) National Register Nomination, March 12, 1973, U.S. Dept. of Interior.
  - c) Mailler, Marion and Dempsey, Janet, 18th Century Homes in New Windsor and its Vicinity, (Cornwall, N.Y., 1968)
  - d) Seese, Mildred, Old Orange Houses, Vol II, (Middletown, N.Y., 1943)
  - e) Akers, Dwight, Outposts of History in Orange County, The Harrison Press, (Washingtonville, N.Y., 1937)
  - f) Chastellux, Marquis de, Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781, 1782., trans. by Howard J. Rice, Jr., Univ. of N. Carolina Press, (Chapel Hill, 1963)
  - g) O'Callaghan, E.S., Documentary History of the State of New York, Ward, Parsons, & Co., (Albany, N.Y., 1849)
  - h) Reed, Dr. & Mrs. Charles B., 18th Century Crossroads in New Windsor, Historical Society of Newburgh Bay and the Highlands, Pub. No. XV., (Newburgh, N.Y., 1909)
3. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated
  - a) Genealogical records of John Haskell, (probably in England)
  - b) Studies of log construction in the Colonies, published and unpublished.
  - c) Studies of building precedents--local, state, national, and European.

Much of the bibliography and the information under "Historical Events and Persons..." is taken from 18th Century Houses in New Windsor and its Vicinity, by Marion Mailler and Janet Dempsey.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural Merit and Interest: This building exhibits an unusual combination of construction techniques applied at a large scale to a manor house: squared logs laid horizontally to the second floor plate, and half timbering above that level.



2. Condition of Fabric: Exterior- fair to poor  
Interior- fair to good

B. Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions: This building is a free-standing farmhouse, 2½ stories with a high basement, and three large bays wide. The main (original) section of the building measures about 55 feet wide and 24 feet deep. It has a rear, 1½ story, shed roofed addition to the northwest measuring about 28 feet wide and 24 feet deep. The overall plan of the entire structure is L-shaped.
2. Foundations: The foundations are of random fieldstone and sit directly on the living rock (shale) of the site. This rock has been hollowed out to form a full basement. The outside southeast corner of the foundation wall has been damaged severely. Little mortar exists in the area below the front door and benches. Patching and repointing has occurred in various places.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: East and west walls of the main section are of light brown stucco; north and south walls are vertical boards on furring. Both finishes are applied over the original exterior fabric. Logs of the main section are now exposed only on that part of the west wall within the rear addition. Walls of the addition are fieldstone covered with white cement stucco.
4. Structural system, framing: The main section retains its original hand-hewn, heavy-timber framing system. The exterior and stair hall walls on the first floor are structural log walls. Heavy timber joists run east to west, first floor through the attic. These vary in dimension, but average about 8" X 8". Rafters are also original, hand-hewn, nominally 4" X 4", and rest on the overhang of the attic floor joists. The addition has stone bearing walls, and sawn wood joists and rafters.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: None extant. The front door is flanked by two benches, probably added in the 19th century.
6. Chimneys: Two fieldstone chimneys remain: one in each gable end of the original section. Chimney bases appear to have been exposed to the second

floor girt. Above that level, the chimneys corbelled within the gable end walls. The chimneys are original to the underside of the roof sheathing, but were rebuilt of brick above the roofline.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: French doors in the two first floor parlors are of Victorian design. The main entrance door and the rear door to the stairwell of the original section are no longer extant. The exterior surround of the entrance door matches the Victorian surrounds of the French doors. Flanking the front door are two pilaster-like boxes that cover the ends of the logs framing the stairwell. A Greek Revival doorway exists in the south wall of the rear addition.
- b. Windows and shutters: A fragment of original window remains in the west wall of the main section at the landing of the stairwell. All other windows are of 19th century construction, and none is completely intact. One louvered, 19th century shutter was found in a second floor room.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The main section is covered by a gable roof. (simple, pitched) The roof pitch, about  $45^{\circ}$ , is original. The rear addition is covered by a shed, or salt-box shaped, roof; the roofline being continuous with that of the main section. The present covering consists of asphalt shingles over board sheathing. Severe damage exists at the southwest corner of the main section, and around the north chimney.
- b. Cornice, Eaves: The simple box cornice on the main section may be partially original. The entire assemblage has weathered severely, and is obscured by overhanging asphalt shingles.
- c. Dormers: The two dormers added to the east side of the roof are of 20th century construction.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: A full basement exists under the

original section. The addition has no basement. The basement is divided into two large spaces by board partitions. Two large, wood posts in the center of the basement help support the logs framing the stairwell. A board and stud partition near the basement stair is infilled with straw insulation.

- b. First floor: This floor has a center hall plan with two large parlors to the north and south. The center hall can be entered from the east (main entrance) or the west, and contains the main stair. Fireplaces within the large rooms are flanked by board partitions, creating walk-in closets. These boards have been dismantled in the south room but remain within the building. The first floor of the addition contains a large room which served as a kitchen, and two smaller rooms. One of the smaller rooms, with a depressed floor and plaster walls and ceiling, seems to have been used for cold storage.
  - c. Second floor: The original section is divided by board partitions into five chambers and a stairhall. The largest two rooms each contain a fireplace and a flanking, walk-in closet. The addition contains one long, narrow room with a raking ceiling that runs the entire width of this section of the house. Access to this room is from the first landing of the stairwell.
  - d. Attic: The attic is one large, unfinished open space.
2. Stairways: The basement stair is most certainly an addition; while those from the first floor up to the attic are original. The handrail and balusters from the first floor to the first landing are also original. However, only seven balusters remain. The treads from the second landing to the second floor are missing, as are the handrail and balusters at that level. The stair has an open well from the first to the second floor, and is boxed in with flush boards from the second floor to the attic.
  3. Flooring:
    - a. Original section: Basement- dirt or concrete topping over shale. First floor- 3" tongue in groove hardwood over original, random-width boards varying from 9" - 16". Second floor-

original, random-width boards, 9" - 18".  
Attic- most floorboards missing.

- b. Addition: Random width board floors, boards varying from 7" - 12".

4. Wall and ceiling finishes:

- a. Basement: Outer walls are of fieldstone while partitions are of flush boards. The ceiling is the underside of the first floor floorboards with wood battens covering the joints.
- b. First floor: The north parlor (Rm 103) has plaster walls with wainscot panelling, and a panelled fireplace wall. The Victorian tin ceiling was applied over earlier plaster work. The stairwell has a plaster ceiling and walls, and the north wall of this space is heavily damaged near the stair. All the finishes have been stripped from the south parlor (Rm 101), exposing the log walls and the fireplace structure. The ceiling of this space is now the underside of the second floor floorboards and beams supporting them. The walls and ceilings of the rooms in the addition are plaster.
- c. Second floor: The rooms in the main section on this level are fully panelled and divided by board partitions. Two of the ceilings in this section (Rms. 202 & 205) have fallen. Two others (in Rms. 203 & 206) are of random-width boards. The other two rooms (Rm. 201 & 204) have plaster ceilings over the original boards. The room in the addition has plaster walls but an unfinished ceiling.

5. Doorways and Doors: Main section of the building has few doors extant. Architraves on the doorways from the large rooms on the first floor to the stairhall are probably original. Doorways in the 18th century panelling are original; those in the 19th century panelling are original to that period. The interior surround of the main entrance door (east facade) is probably original 18th century work. Door from the north parlor to the main room of the addition is of Late Victorian design. The only original interior door in the main section is board door to the attic stair. Board doors in the back addition are original to that section.

6. Special decorative features: The wainscot panelling on the first floor, and the fielded panelling on the

interior side of exterior walls and on the fireplace walls of second floor rooms is early 18th century work and probably original. The beaded board partition between Rooms 201 & 202 is probably also original. Other panelled partitions on the second floor, while in original locations, are probably 19th century replacements.

7. Hardware: Almost no hardware of any type remains in the house. The only original work remaining are the strap hinges on the attic stair door.
8. Mechanical equipment: Heat was originally supplied to the house by fireplaces; and later, by Franklin stoves. One stove of more recent design remains in storage in a second floor room. Two sinks were added in the north parlor (Rm 103) in the 20th century. These were apparently connected to other fixtures in the rear kitchen addition. The kitchen fixtures no longer remain in the building. No central heating system, plumbing, or electrical system was ever installed.

#### D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces east-southeast and is located on the side of Snake Hill, south of Newburgh, New York, facing the Hudson River and a wide sweep of mountains beyond.
2. Historic landscape design: This building was the manor house for a large farm/estate, which has since been broken up into smaller tracts. Original outbuildings and other site features no longer exist. Consequently, little evidence exists for the original landscape design.
3. Outbuildings: A privy of 19th century design remains within the woods approximately 250 feet to the northwest of the house. The barn, which serves as the Calvet Rental Office below and to the east of the house, is probably part of a later farm layout.

Prepared by: Michael J. Mills  
Project Director  
November, 1978

#### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation made during the 1978 Haskell House Summer Project. This project was under-

taken and funded by the Orange County Citizens Foundation, with technical advice from the Historic American Building Survey. The project was initiated upon recommendations made by Charles E. Petersen, FAIA. Some field notes made in 1971 were provided by John R. Stevens, architectural historian, of Old Bethpage Village. Photographer Mark Leek of Cooperstown, New York, made the documentary photographs. Calvet Tool Rental, the present owners of the building, provided an employee, John Mack, to help with the measuring. Don Clark, the Orange County Historian, and Janet Dempsey provided most of the historical information. The building was measured and drawn from July-November, 1978, by Michael James Mills, Architect, of Columbia University's Graduate Program in Historic Preservation. This documentation was edited for transmittal to the Library of Congress by Eleni Silverman, Architectural Historian, HABS, in May 1984.